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A
LETTER
TO
SIR WALTER SCOTT, BART.

LETTER

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LONDON:

PRINTED BY J. BULLOCK, ESSEX-STREET, BOUVERIE-STREET.

A

LETTER

TO

SIR WALTER SCOTT, BART.

IN ANSWER TO THE REMONSTRANCE
OF OXONIENSIS

ON THE PUBLICATION OF

CAIN, A MYSTERY,

BY

LORD BYRON.



LONDON:

PRINTED FOR RODWELL AND MARTIN,
BOND-STREET.

1822.

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LETTER

TO

SIR WALTER SCOTT, BART.

IN ANSWER TO THE REMONSTRANCE

OF GENTLEMEN

OF THE UNIVERSITY OF

GLASGOW, A MYSTERY

BY

LORD BYRON.

LONDON:

PRINTED FOR RODWICK AND MANNING,

ROD-STREET.

1826

TO

SIR WALTER SCOTT, BART.

SIR,

IN an age when writers so frequently make use of the names of eminent men for the purpose of giving fictitious interest and value to their own sentiments on politics and literature, as it were by some reflection of borrowed light, I am sensible that to relieve myself from the charge of unwarranted intrusion in this address, some justification must be requisite beyond the immediate connexion of all literary subjects with the name of Sir Walter Scott. For although it might be urged, that the merits of any composition cannot be more appropriately referred than to one, who as a poet, an historian, a moralist and an antiquary, has received from the public voice the highest meed of approbation and applause, yet this would scarcely

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justify an unauthorized communication through the medium of the press on any subject of ordinary interest.

It is only necessary, however, to name Lord Byron to ensure attention; and I hope to stand acquitted in your opinion of any indecorous freedom, if, in vindicating his recent publication of *CAIN* from the attacks with which it has been assailed, I presume to place myself under your auspices: for the circumstance of that poem having been inscribed to you by the noble author may, at least, warrant the supposition that you are not indifferent to the estimation in which it may be held. When Byron dedicates to Scott the efforts of his muse, we mark with interest the alliance of great minds; and I shall proceed with more confidence in the proposed inquiry, from the conclusion that, as his lordship's delicacy, even in respect of friendship, must have prevented any unauthorised dedication, the '*Mystery of Cain*' has in some degree received the sanction of your approval. The following remarks are wholly called forth by a lively sense of the unjust imputations cast upon a work, which I have no doubt has afforded to you, Sir, in common with many others, the highest intellectual gratification.

I allude particularly to a pamphlet, which has been recently addressed to the publisher of Lord Byron's works in the form of a 'Remonstrance,' under the signature of 'Oxonienſis.' This tract appears to me not only to caſt moſt vehement aſperſions upon the character of Lord Byron, but to be calculated alſo to produce much miſchief amongſt ſome claſſes of readers, by adding the ſuppoſed ſanction of his Lordſhip's name to doctrines of infidelity, ſo broadly and ſo boldly aſcribed to him by that writer. If his Lordſhip's character alone were implicated, the moſt zealous of his admirers might well be ſilent: he can ably defend himſelf, if he ſhould think it worth his while to do ſo, and needs not any apology from a feeble pen: but as *CAIN* may be conſidered in ſome meaſure the property of the public, a candid and diſinter-eſted reader may be excuſed for offering ſome obſervations on the nature and tendency of this beautiful poem.

The 'Remonstrance' (which does not even affect to be a criticism) ſets out with ſome virulent abuſe of Lord Byron's perſonal character; and ſurmiſes that the publication of *CAIN* may be a uſeful meaſure of finance to his lordſhip, whom he ſuppoſes to be a good 'hand at a

bargain, and that Plutus sometimes goes shares with Apollo in his inspirations!' To say nothing of the bad taste of such an insinuation, it seems peculiarly ungenerous thus obtrusively to draw an inference of the noble author's effusions being called forth by mere mercenary motives. Whether 'Oxoniensis' was led to this view of the subject by the habit of his own calculations, I will not assume to determine, as I can have no wish to make any personal allusions; nor shall I expatiate on the practice of all poets, from Shakspeare to the present day, who have always looked to—and been justified in expecting some remuneration for their compositions, more solid than that of fame.

The writer then finds fault with 'the desultory style of Lord Byron's poetry in general, deplores the disappointment *every one* has felt at the portentous cloud, which has involved his whole intellect in its fatal gloom;'—and lastly reproaches him with private circumstances, that have occurred in his Lordship's family, charging him with being 'an alien to his home and his country, and all the charities those names should embrace; with having declared war against all the institutions of civilised humanity, and being now, at last,

goaded on by an arrogant and all-mastering vanity to arraign God's wisdom and goodness, and to cavil at the conditions, under which the human race has been called into existence.'

All this, and much more to the same purport, is, to say the least of it, quite foreign from the subject, and establishes the immorality of CAIN as little as it proves the orthodoxy of 'Oxonienensis.' You will perhaps feel with me, Sir, that whoever may be the writer, such language is unfitting a literary discussion, and still less any advocacy of a religion, whose mild and charitable doctrines are amongst the many sure tests of its divine institution.

The principal points which I shall propose for present consideration are, whether Lord Byron (for such are the specific charges contained in the Remonstrance) 'has profited by the celebrity of his name to palm upon the world obsolete trash, the very off-scourings of Bayle and Voltaire:—whether 'this poem, this Mystery, with which he has insulted us, is nothing more than a Cento from Voltaire's novels, and the most objectionable articles in Bayle's Dictionary, served up in clumsy cuttings of ten syllables, for the purpose of giving it the guise of poetry:—whether CAIN really

contains any ‘blasphemous impieties, likely to mislead the ignorant, unsettle the wavering, or confirm the hardened sceptic in his misbelief:’—and whether there can be found in it ‘any pestilent sophistries framed to mislead the weaker sex.’

And here, Sir, I must be permitted to premise, in order that these observations may not be misinterpreted, that I love and revere all the sacred doctrines of our divine religion, and humbly hope I am not less anxious than ‘Oxoniensis,’ to cherish ‘those institutions of our country, by which morality and religion are most effectually supported.’ If I did not conscientiously believe that Lord Byron’s sentiments are either misunderstood, or misrepresented by the author of the anonymous ‘Remonstrance,’ and that the publication of this ‘Mystery’ carries with it neither the defiance of open hostility, nor the seeds of disguised enmity to the Religion we all profess, no consideration would induce me to attempt its defence.

As the greater portion of the drama is occupied with scenes between Cain and Lucifer, it may be presumed that the passages principally objected to are the sentiments, which

they express in the course of their colloquies. 'Oxoniensis,' however, has himself furnished a standard, by which Lord Byron's Poem shall be judged; and I may take for granted, after his eulogy of MILTON, that wherever those personages of the 'Mystery' express nothing more daring in sentiment and language, than what is pronounced by the mighty spirits, which that great hand called forth to people the regions of his fancy,—that, so far at least, the modern Poet cannot, with any justice or propriety, be said to have used more dangerous materials. For if we find in Milton many striking parallels for the demoniacal sentiments of Lord Byron's characters, then must candour pronounce that CAIN is neither an impious nor an immoral poem, unless PARADISE LOST fall under the same imputation.

Let us then, as shortly as the case will admit, examine those passages, against which 'Oxoniensis' has thought fit to pronounce his anathema, considering them with reference to their own immediate tendency, and bringing them to the test of Milton's compositions.

I need not dwell upon the manifest absurdity there would have been in making Cain and Lucifer speak the language of angels, or true wor-

shippers of the Deity; nor impress upon the mind of any reader, susceptible of the proprieties of composition and of the true delineation of character, that they are creatures of the imagination, an ideal race of beings—not to be measured by the common standard applied to man, but by the great objects comprehended in the event of the Drama. When the characters were to be depicted by the poet, it would have been wholly impossible to represent them other than we have always considered them; Cain—as one, who, never having known ‘the calm of a contented knowledge,’ is ready to receive all impious impressions, who is afterwards a murderer, and of whom Lucifer says,

Hadst thou not been fit by thine own soul
For such companionship, I would not now
Have stood before thee as I am;

Lucifer—as a vindictive Demon, who by subtle arguments is to break down all the great truths, revealed to fallen man for his consolation and guidance; ere he can lead his victim to imbrue his hands in his brother’s blood, and thus make him the instrument, at once of his own revenge against the Highest, and

of the confirmation of his dominion over the new world.

Such is the cast of characters necessary to work out the great moral of the ‘Mystery;’ and if Lord Byron, or any other poet, may be charged with giving his own sentiments through the mouth of his fictitious characters; then Shakespeare, Milton—nay, the great moralists of all ages—must be treated as the abettors of evil; and examples of depravity are no longer to be considered as written for our instruction, but regarded as the emanation of a malignant temper in the authors who record them.

The fallen spirit first presents himself to Cain, as he is absorbed in the midst of a discontented sceptical train of thought:—

The tree was planted, and why not for him?

If not, why place him near it, where it grew

The fairest in the centre?

In order to establish an early influence over his mind, by inspiring an idea of his greatness and power, he comes to him in a shape ‘Like to the angels, mightier far than they, nor less beautiful.’ He tells him he is ‘master of spirits;’ and excites his astonishment by showing him that he is acquainted with his most

secret thoughts; flattering him, at the same time, with the assurance that those thoughts are worthy and noble;—

'Tis your immortal part,
Which speaks within you ;

declares to him that he has been deceived;—that he shall not die, but live ;—seems to sympathise in his wretchedness, with which, if *he* had made him, he should not have been afflicted ;—and having by these arts inspired Cain with such an awful sense of his attributes, that he exclaims, ‘Thou look’st almost a God,’ he insinuates that the angels of Heaven offer up a forced homage to the Deity:

The seraphs sing,
And say—what they must sing and say, on pain
Of being that which I am—and thou art.

And again in the same act ;

Higher things than ye are slaves : and higher
Than them or ye would be so, did they not
Prefer an independency of torture
To the smooth agonies of adulation
In hymns and harpings, and self-seeking prayers
To that which is omnipotent, because
It is omnipotent, and not from love,
But terror, and self-hope.

Thus Milton’s Satan taunts the Archangel

when he meets him between the two opposing hosts of armed spirits ;

- ‘ At first I thought that liberty and heaven
- ‘ To heavenly souls had been all one ;
- ‘ But now I see that most through sloth had rather serve,
- ‘ Minist’ring spirits, train’d up in feast and song :
- ‘ Such hast thou arm’d, the minstrelsy of heaven,
- ‘ Servility with freedom to contend,
- ‘ As both their deeds compared this day shall prove.’

Book vi. v. 165.

And with no less impiety, in the same Book of PARADISE LOST, he thus addresses his assembled train in Heaven :

- ‘ Another now hath to himself engross’d
- ‘ All pow’r, and us eclipsed, under the name
- ‘ Of King anointed, for whom all this haste
- ‘ Of midnight march, and hurried meeting here,
- ‘ This only to consult, how we may best,
- ‘ With what may be devised of honours new,
- ‘ Receive him coming ; to receive from us
- ‘ Knee-tribute, yet unpaid, prostration vile !
- ‘ Too much to one ; but double how endured
- ‘ To one and to his image now proclaim’d ?
- ‘ But what if better counsels might erect
- ‘ Our minds, and teach us to cast off this yoke ?
- ‘ Will ye submit your necks, and choose to bend
- ‘ The supple knee ?’ &c.

And again, Mammon, when he counsels the

Devils to 'prefer hard liberty to the easy yoke of servile pomp' in Heaven.

' Suppose he should relent,
 ' And publish grace to all, on promise made
 ' Of new subjection; with what eyes could we
 ' Stand in his presence humble, and receive
 ' Strict laws imposed, to celebrate his throne
 ' With warbled hymns, and to his godhead sing
 ' Forced Hallelujahs; while he lordly sits
 ' Our envied sov'reign, and his altar breathes
 ' Ambrosial odours, and ambrosial flowers
 ' Our servile offerings; how wearisome
 ' Eternity, so spent in worship paid
 ' To whom we hate.'

Book ii. v. 237.

With all the daring of the malignant devil, described in the following passage of the 'Mystery,' can it be said that Lord Byron has gone further than Milton? or must it not at least be allowed that, in an age and nation, holding the name of that great poet in highest honour and applause,—the modern dramatist might well expect to escape the censures of envy in the flow of his own genius and imagination? Lucifer, having first called in question the sincerity of the adoration paid by the Angels to the Majesty of Heaven, that he may, by their supposed example, encourage Cain in his fu-

the effect of temperature on the rate of reaction.

Souls who dare use their immortality—
Souls who dare look the omnipotent tyrant in

His everlasting face, and tell him that

His evil is not good! If he has made.

As he saith, which I know not, nor believe—

But, if he made us—he cannot unmake.

So Satan, in answer to Abdiel, in PARADISE

ost, with equal insolence denies the Godhead

the Messiah.

That we were form'd then, say'st thou? and the work

Of secondary hands, by task transferr'd

From father to his son? strange point and new!

Doctrine which we would know whence learn'd.

‘ Who saw

When this creation was? rememb'rest thou
 Thy making while the Maker said, 'thou being?

Thy making, while the Maker gave thee being:
We know no time when we were not as now:

Know none before us, self-begot, self-raised

By our own quick'ning pow'r, &c.

Our puissance is our own.' Book v. v. 853.

Mark the noble, the original strain of dread.

ly sublime conception, in which the poet

gives utterance to the blasphemies of Lucifer :

yet will any one say, that such sentiments expressed are either intended or calculated to produce in the mind of the reader any thing like approbation? Surely not—we are surprised at the effort of imagination, which produced them, but they only serve to render humanity more dear to us; to impress upon our minds a deeper detestation and abhorrence of the spirits of evil, who could so impiously arraign the beneficent author of all good.

We are immortal ! nay, he'd have us so,
 That he may torture : let him ! he is great—
 But, in his greatness, is no happier than
 We in our conflict ! Goodness would not make
 Evil ; what else hath he made ? But let him
 Sit on his vast and solitary throne,
 Creating worlds, to make eternity
 Less burthensome to his immense existence
 And unparticipated solitude !
 Let him crowd orb on orb : he is alone
 Infinite, indissoluble tyrant !
 Could he but crush himself, 'twere the best boon
 He ever granted : but let him reign on,
 And multiply himself in misery !
 Spirits and men, at least we sympathise ;
 And, suffering in concert, make our pangs,
 Innumerable, more endurable,
 By the unbounded sympathy of all—

With all ! But *He!* so wretched in his height,
 So restless in his wretchedness, must still
 Create, and re-create——

Compare this passage with many which are to be found in *Paradise Lost*, and judge whether Milton's devils are less hateful in their blasphemy, or less opprobrious against the Majesty of Heaven.

‘ Shall we sit ling’ring here,
 ‘ Heav’n’s fugitives, and for our dwelling-place
 ‘ Accept this dark opprobrious den of shame,
 ‘ The prison of his tyranny, who reigns
 ‘ By our delay ? No, let us rather choose,
 ‘ Arm’d with hell flames and fury, all at once
 ‘ O’er Heaven’s high tow’rs to force resistless way,
 ‘ Turning our tortures into horrid arms
 ‘ Against the torturer.’ Book ii. v. 55.

And thus Satan to Beelzebub :

‘ To bow and sue for grace
 ‘ With suppliant knee, and deify his pow’r,
 ‘ Who from the terror of this arm so late
 ‘ Doubted his empire ; that were low indeed !
 ‘ That were an ignominy and shame beneath
 ‘ This downfall ! since by fate the strength of gods
 ‘ And this empyreal substance cannot fail ;
 ‘ Since through experience of this great event,
 ‘ In arms not worse, in foresight much advanced,
 ‘ We may with more successful hope resolve

- ‘ To wage, by force or guile, eternal war
- ‘ Irreconcilable to our grand foe ;
- ‘ Who now triumphs, and in the excess of joy
- ‘ Sole reigning, holds the tyranny of heav’n.’

Book i: v. 116.

And on his approach to earth, having undertaken the task of corrupting the first woman ;

- ‘ To me shall be the glory sole among
- ‘ Th’ infernal powers, in one day to have marr’d
- ‘ What he, Almighty styled, six nights and days
- ‘ Continued making, and who knows how long
- ‘ Before had been contriving, though, perhaps
- ‘ Not longer than since I in one night freed
- ‘ From servitude inglorious well nigh half
- ‘ Th’ angelic name, and thinner left the crowd
- ‘ Of his adorers: he to be avenged,
- ‘ And to repair his numbers thus impair’d,
- ‘ Whether such virtue spent of old now fail’d
- ‘ More angels to create, if they at least
- ‘ Are his created, or to spite us more,
- ‘ Determined to advance into our room
- ‘ A creature form’d of earth,’ &c. Book ix. v. 135.

Not to multiply these passages from Milton, though we might swell our subject with many others equally bold, and equally expressive of the sentiments of a fallen host, who war against heaven and defy the Almighty, I proceed to show the progress of Cain’s seduction.

Far from being shocked at Lucifer's impiety, he says,

Thou speak'st to me of things, which long have swum
In visions through my thoughts.

He acknowledges that he is dissatisfied with the weight of daily toil, and the comparatively virtuous tenor of his father's life ; and that, until he saw Lucifer, ' he had never met aught to sympathise with him.'

Encouraged by this declaration, Lucifer proceeds in his treacherous work. He has just instilled into the mind of Cain a sentiment of God's injustice and tyranny in the fall and punishment of man, which he contrasts with what he himself would have done for him.

I would have made ye
Gods; and even He who thrust ye forth, so thrust ye
Because ' ye should not eat the fruits of life,
' And become gods as we.'

Then who was the demon? He,
Who would not let ye live, or he who would
Have made ye live for ever in the joy
And power of knowledge?

Thus the devil, in the ninth book of PARADISE LOST, seduces Eve by specious arguments

to doubt the equity of God's command, that she should not eat the fruit of the tree of knowledge.

- ' God therefore cannot hurt ye, and be just;
- ' Not just, not God; not fear'd then, nor obey'd:
- ' Your fear itself of death removes the fear.
- ' Why then was this forbid? Why but to awe,
- ' Why but to keep you low and ignorant,
- ' His worshippers?'

Lucifer, however, disclaims having tempted Eve: he pretends to sympathise with mankind in their fall from happiness; and to have confessed that it was through his intervention that death came into the world, would have belied his own words, and have driven Cain from him in terror. When, therefore, he lets fall an expression, which excites the suspicion of Cain, — ' Ah! didst *thou* tempt my mother?' he immediately answers,

I tempt none, &c.

Poor clay! what should I tempt them for, or how?

What

Was there to envy in the narrow bounds
Of Paradise, that spirits who pervade
Space——but

Here he craftily breaks off his discourse of im-

material things, the rather to increase Cain's desire of knowing their mysteries, and to watch the workings of his mind :

But I speak to thee of what thou know'st not.

Cain's presumptuous spirit answers,

But thou canst not

Speak aught of knowledge, which I would not know,
And do not thirst to know, and bear a mind
To know.

Luc. Dar'st thou to look on Death?

Then follow those sublime and beautiful passages, descriptive of the feelings, which agitate the soul of Cain, when he contemplates the nature and the power of death;—passages which, of themselves, would stamp the writer's poetic genius of the highest order.

Cain.

Thoughts unspeakable

Crowd in my breast to burning, when I hear

Of this almighty Death, who is, it seems,

Inevitable. Could I wrestle with him?

I wrestled with the lion, when a boy,

In play, till he ran roaring from my gripe.

Luc. It has no shape; but will absorb all things
That bear the form of earth-born being.

Cain.

Ah!

I thought it was a being: who could do

Such evil things to beings save a being?

Luc. Ask the Destroyer.

Cain.

Who?

Luc.

The Maker—call him

Which name thou wilt; he makes but to destroy.

Cain. I knew not that, yet thought it, since I heard
Of death: although I know not what it is,
Yet it seems horrible. I have look'd out
In the vast desolate night in search of him;
And when I saw gigantic shadows in
The umbrage of the walls of Eden, chequer'd
By the far flashing of the cherubs' swords,
I watch'd for what I thought his coming; for
With fear rose longing in my heart to know
What 'twas which shook us all—but nothing came.
And then I turn'd my weary eyes from off
Our native and forbidden Paradise,
Up to the lights above us, in the azure,
Which are so beautiful: shall they, too, die?

Luc. Perhaps—but long outlive both thine and thee.

Cain. I'm glad of that; I would not have them die,
They are so lovely. What is death? I fear,
I feel, it is a dreadful thing; but what,
I cannot compass: 'tis denounced against us,
Both them who sinn'd and sinn'd not, as an ill—
What ill?

Luc. To be resolved into the earth.

Cain. Alas! I scarcely now know what it is,
And yet I fear it—fear I know not what!

Luc. And I, who know all things, fear nothing: see
What is true knowledge.

Cain.

Wilt thou teach me all?

Lucifer, perceiving the intense interest to which he has excited his destined victim, takes advantage of such a moment to secure him in his toils: he promises to gratify his thirst after the higher knowledge to which he alludes; but upon one condition (and to this point we may observe his treacherous reasoning throughout has been directed) that he will pay him the tribute of his homage, and confess himself his votary.

Wilt thou teach me all? (says Cain.)

Luc. Ay, upon one condition.

Cain.

Name it.

Luc.

That

Thou dost fall down and worship me—thy Lord.

Let us for a moment quit the language of poetry, and in sober reason inquire how Cain was to be seduced to the commission of his crime, which forms the great event of the scripture history, and of the drama before us, unless by such subtle arguments as, to our sorrow, continue to exercise a fatal influence over so many of the sons of humanity. How otherwise was the mind of Cain to be inspired with the contempt and hatred of God's divine laws, to which in the progress of events we see him conducted, a wretched blood-stained criminal; or by what

less powerful agency hurried on to perdition, than by the fascination of the unrighteous spirit, the permitted enemy of mankind? And if by such a being, how otherwise than by means which suited his character of a demon, and might best accomplish his malicious object? by creating a doubt of Heaven's mercy and goodness, by inculcating an awful admiration of the attributes of God's enemy, by inspiring a discontent of his own imagined wrongs, and a disbelief of those truths, which formed his surest safeguard, and the mainspring of his happiness? One or all of these are the daily and hourly causes of man's fall from virtue; they are the instruments, by which sin is permitted to operate upon our depraved nature; and though Cain and Lucifer express themselves in the strong language of poetry, and are bolder in their impiety,—the one a fiend, the other already an infidel, in his heart,—yet there are few of us, perhaps, who are not sometimes assailed by the whisperings of the same doubts, and of the same discontented spirit. The personages of the 'Mystery' give utterance only to those feelings by which, though not openly pronounced, and perhaps never clearly defined, man always has been, and always will be, impelled to works of evil.

The demon, however, is foiled in his expectation of immediate conquest over Cain by that very pride of heart, which had first induced him to attempt his conversion : Cain refuses to worship the seducer, not from any virtuous hesitation, or fear of offending the majesty of ‘ a jealous God,’ but, says he,

I never

As yet have bow’d unto my father’s God :

Why should I bow to thee?

Luc.

Hast thou ne’er bow’d

To him?

Cain. Have I not said it? need I say it?

Could not thy mighty knowledge teach thee that?

Luc. He who bows not to him has bow’d to me.

Cain. But I will bend to neither.

Luc.

Ne’er the less

Thou art my worshipper : not worshipping

Him makes thee mine the same.

We may hope that this, at least, is no pestilent doctrine, calculated to mislead the ignorant, but a confirmation of the natural train of inference, which I hope I shall hereafter prove to be deducible from the whole drama : it points out the danger of unsettled sceptical reasonings, which lead to the denial of the God who made us, and our consequent subjection to the influence of his declared enemy.

Having necessarily detained you so long, Sir, in the conference of Cain with his infernal companion, I turn with pleasure to the virtuous sentiments of Adah, who now enters upon the scene in search of her husband. What a contrast is afforded to the presumption of that wretched infidel, in the innocence of heart which shines forth in her character! Cain apprises her that he must depart with the Spirit; and when, in answer to her anxious inquiries who it is that interposes to separate them, he informs her ‘He is a God,’ she replies,

How know’st thou?

Cain. He speaks like
A god.

Adah. So did the serpent, and it lied.

Luc. Thou errest, Adah!—was not the tree that
Of knowledge?

Adah. Ay—to our eternal sorrow.

Luc. And yet that grief is knowledge—so he lied not:
And if he did betray you, ’twas with truth;
And truth in its own essence cannot be
But good.

With equally pernicious and more successful arguments Milton’s Satan tempted our first mother in the garden:

' Queen of this universe, do not believe
 ' Those rigid threats of death ; ye shall not die :
 ' How should ye ? By the fruit ? it gives you life
 ' To knowledge : by the threat'ner ? Look on me,
 ' Me who have touch'd and tasted, yet both live,
 ' And life more perfect have attain'd than fate
 ' Meant me, by vent'ring higher than my lot.'

Book ix. v. 684.

' And wherein lies
 ' Th' offence, that man should thus attain to know ?
 ' What can your knowledge hurt him, or this tree
 ' Impart against his will, if all be his ?
 ' Or is it envy ? and can envy dwell
 ' In heav'nly breasts ?'

Book ix. v. 725.

Adah, superior to the sophistry by which
 the fiend would involve her in the destruction
 that awaits her husband, replies

But all we know of it has gather'd
 Evil on ill : expulsion from our home,
 And dread, and toil, and sweat, and heaviness ;
 Remorse of that which was—and hope of that
 Which cometh not.

She has no desire to attain the knowledge he
 would lead her to, at the expense of her virtue
 and her happiness : she perceives the devil's
 craftiness, and would instantly persuade Cain
 to fly from the perdition that already seems to
 threaten them :

Cain ! walk not with this spirit.
 Bear with what we have borne, and love me—

And when, in answer to the idea she had expressed, that Omnipotence must be all goodness, Lucifer insidiously asks,

Was it so in Eden ?

She exclaims,

Fiend ! tempt me not with beauty ; thou art fairer
 Than was the serpent, and as false.

Luc.

As true.

Ask Eve, your mother ; bears she not the knowledge
 Of good and evil ?

Adah.

Oh, my mother ! thou
 Hast pluck'd a fruit more fatal to thine offspring
 Than to thyself ; thou at the least hast past
 Thy youth in Paradise, in innocent
 And happy intercourse with happy spirits ;
 But we, thy children, ignorant of Eden,
 Are girt about by demons, who assume
 The words of God, and tempt us with our own
 Dissatisfied and curious thoughts—as thou
 Wert work'd on by the snake, in thy most flush'd
 And heedless, harmless, wantonness of bliss.

I cannot answer this immortal thing
 Which stands before me ; I cannot abhor him ;
 I look upon him with a pleasing fear,
 And yet I fly not from him : in his eye
 There is a fastening attraction which

Fixes my fluttering eyes on his ; my heart
 Beats quick ; he awes me, and yet draws me near,
 Nearer, and nearer : Cain—Cain—save me from him.
 He is not God—nor God's : I have beheld
 The cherubs and the seraphs ; he looks not
 Like them.

Again, to Lucifer's insinuation,
 Yet thy God is alone ; and is he happy ?
 Lonely and good ?
 She replies,

He is not so ; he hath
 The angels and the mortals to make happy,
 And thus becomes so in diffusing joy :
 What else can joy be, but the spreading joy ?

I may be permitted to pause for a moment on reading this beautiful and thrilling description of the feelings of a youthful heart disposed to virtue, and fearful of the first influences of a fatal propensity to evil, which had been entailed upon her by her parents' fall. What pathos, what flow of language, how harmonious and expressive ! There is, indeed, something so beautiful in the whole character of Adah, that we might be almost tempted to imagine the poet had touched some responsive chord, that vibrated to the kindly affections of his heart, as he delineated her virtues. If it were

within the intended scope of the present tract to analyze the individual features of each character in the 'Mystery,' we might dwell with increasing pleasure on every successive sentiment she utters. But I must venture to refer to such points only as bear upon the immediate subject of our inquiry, the moral tendency and fitness of the drama.

The Prince of Darkness was well able to discriminate between the characters of Cain and Adah: to the former he has already proposed that he should fall down and worship him—his lord; but he knows how Adah would treat such a suggestion; he sees the horror she entertains of his blasphemous insinuations, and knows that any temptation he might assail her with must be so artfully concealed, as not to alarm the sensibility of her virtue: yet she must be tempted;—and upon her expressing the love she bears to the beauty of

The star which watches, welcoming the morn,
he asks,

And why not adore?

Could he only persuade her, as she beheld the works of creation, to make those beauties, of which she was so susceptible, the objects of her

adoration, her progress to infidelity and the worship of himself would have been easy and natural. But with what unexpected force does the simplicity of her answer defeat all his purposes !

Our father
Adores the Invisible only.

Luc. But the symbols
Of the Invisible are the loveliest
Of what is visible ; and yon bright star
Is leader of the host of heaven.

Adah. Our father
Saith that he has beheld the God himself
Who made him and our mother.

Luc. Hast thou seen him ?

Adah. Yes—in his works.

Luc. But in his being ?

Adah. No—

Save in my father, who is God's own image ;
Or in his angels, who are like to thee—
And brighter, yet less beautiful and powerful
In seeming : as the silent sunny noon,
All light they look upon us ; but thou seem'st
Like an ethereal night, where long white clouds
Streak the deep purple, and unnumber'd stars
Spangle the wonderful mysterious vault
With things that look as if they would be suns ;
So beautiful, unnumber'd, and endearing,
Not dazzling, and yet drawing us to them,

They fill my eyes with tears, and so dost thou.
 Thou seem'st unhappy; do not make us so,
 And I will weep for thee.

Untouched by the tenderness of this appeal,
 and of a heart, which offers to weep for him if he
 be unfortunate, he is stung with malignant dis-
 appointment at the gentle but unyielding virtue
 of one, who he might have expected would fall
 an easy prey to his specious reasoning; and
 he answers her with a dreadful denunciation of
 woe to all the future generations, which shall
 descend from her.

Alas! those tears!

Couldst thou but know what oceans will be shed——

Adah. By me?

Luc. By all.

Adah. What all?

Luc. The million millions——

The myriad myriads—the all-peopled earth——

The unpeopled earth—and the o'er-peopled Hell,

Of which thy bosom is the germ.

Adah. Oh Cain!

This spirit curseth us.

The demon perceives that the innocence of
 Adah, her steadfast belief in the truths that
 had been revealed to her, and her distrust of
 his new and dangerous theories, had rendered

her proof against all his attacks ; and despairing to overcome her virtuous dispositions, he turns from her to his more willing victim, whom he commands to follow him to the other world, where he will satiate his thirst for knowledge.

It appears to me, Sir, that no one who brings to the attentive perusal of this ‘Mystery’ a candid and unbiassed judgment, animated with a sincere Christian desire rather to discover in it some new confirmation of the faith that is in him, than an impeachment of the doctrines of his religion, can read the first act, through which we have been conducted, and fail to deduce an edifying moral from the whole. Let him call to mind the relative influence, which the master-spirit of evil exercises over Cain and Adah, and he will see how forcibly the poet has portrayed the unhappy consequences of permitting even the approach of scepticism, whilst his heart must expand with gratitude in the pleasing consciousness, that virtue and happiness are inseparably united. On the one hand he will see a discontented and aspiring mind, relying rather on its own strength than on the benign influence of religion, which is no sooner assailed by the arguments of infidelity, than it yields to the congenial spirit, and is lost in its

own self-love and vanity : on the other hand he may contemplate the calm and steadfast faith of a grateful heart, impressed with a sense of its own unworthiness, which either flies from the insidious attack of scepticism, or rests its hope on the divine assistance, as all-sufficient for its defence.

In the second act Lucifer and Cain are introduced to us travelling through the Abyss of Space. Cain fearing to sink, is encouraged by his guide to trust in his protecting power.

Believe—and sink not ! doubt—and perish ! thus
 Would run the edict of the other God,
 Who names me demon to his angels ; they
 Echo the sound to miserable things,
 Which knowing nought beyond their shallow senses,
 Worship the word which strikes their ear, and deem
 Evil or good what is proclaim'd to them
 In their abasement. I will have none such :
 Worship or worship not, thou shalt behold
 The worlds beyond thy little world, nor be
 Amerced, for doubts beyond thy little life,
 With torture of *my* dooming.

As they recede from Paradise in their rapid flight, Cain exclaims, in astonishment,

Oh, god, or demon, or whate'er thou art,
Is yon our earth?

Luc. Dost thou not recognize
The dust which form'd your father?

Cain. Can it be?
Yon small blue circle, swinging in far ether,
With an inferior circlet near it still,
Which looks like that which lit our earthly night?

As we move
Like sunbeams onward, it grows small and smaller,
And as it waxes little, and then less,
Gathers a halo round it, like the light
Which shone the roundest of the stars, when I
Beheld them from the skirts of Paradise;
Methinks they both, as we recede from them,
Appear to join the innumerable stars
Which are around us; and, as we move on,
Increase their myriads.

Lucifer, observing his delight at these new wonders of creation, takes care to counteract the admiration they might produce of the omnipotence of the Deity, by insinuating that his power is exercised for the destruction of mankind, 'all fore-doomed' to be frail and wretched.

And if there should be
 Worlds greater than thine own, inhabited
 By greater things, and they themselves far more
 In number than the dust of thy dull earth,
 Though multiplied to animated atoms,
 All living, and all doom'd to death, and wretched,
 What wouldst thou think?

Cain. Spirit ! if
 It be, as thou hast said (and I within
 Feel the prophetic torture of its truth),
 Here let me die : for to give birth to those
 Who can but suffer many years, and die,
 Methinks is merely propagating death,
 And multiplying murder.

Thus Adam, after his expulsion from Paradise,
 ‘in a troubled sea of passion tost’ at the sight
 of the growing miseries of the world, to which
 he is exiled, wishes that death might end the
 existence of mortality, and exclaims ;—

‘ O miserable of happy ! Is this the end

‘ Of this new glorious world, &c.

‘ Yet well if here would end

‘ The misery : I deserved it, and would bear

‘ My own deservings ; but this will not serve :

‘ All that I eat or drink, or shall beget,

‘ Is propagated curse. O voice once heard

‘ Delightfully, ‘ Increase and multiply,’

‘ Now death to hear ! for what can I increase

‘ Or multiply, but curses on my head ?’ Book x. v. 720.

Proceeding onwards, Cain is again enraptured with the glories of the skies, and exclaims,

Oh, thou beautiful

And unimaginable ether ! and
 Ye multiplying masses of increased
 And still-increasing lights ! what are ye ? what
 Is this blue wilderness of interminable
 Air, where ye roll along, as I have seen
 The leaves along the limpid streams of Eden ?
 Is your course measured for ye ? or do ye
 Sweep on in your unbounded revelry
 Through an aerial universe of endless
 Expansion, at which my soul aches to think,
 Intoxicated with eternity ?

Oh God ! Oh Gods ! or whatsoe'er ye are !

How beautiful ye are ! how beautiful

Your works, or accidents, or whatsoe'er

They may be ! Let me die, as atoms die,

(If that they die) or know ye in your might

And knowledge ! My thoughts are not in this hour

Unworthy what I see, though my dust is ;

Spirit ! let me expire, or see them nearer.

Luc. Art thou not nearer ? look back to thine earth !

Cain. Where is it ? I see nothing save a mass
 Of most innumerable lights.

Luc.

Look there !

Cain. I cannot see it.

Luc.

Yet it sparkles still.

Cain. What, yonder !

Luc.

Yea.

Cain.

And wilt thou tell me so?

Why, I have seen the fire-flies and fire-worms
Sprinkle the dusky groves and the green banks
In the dim twilight, brighter than yon world
Which bears them.

Luc.

Thou hast seen both worms and worlds,
Each bright and sparkling,—what dost think of them?

Cain. That they are beautiful in their own sphere,
And that the night, which makes both beautiful
The little shining fire-fly in its flight,
And the immortal star in its great course,
Must both be guided.

How noble an incident of the poem is this finely imagined flight! of which, Sir, I anticipate you will think me justified in advancing, that it loses nothing of its beauties, or its high original character, by a comparison with Satan's aerial journey in search of Paradise, as described by Milton. But, for the present, I must refrain from further extracts, however beautiful and striking, to return once more to the moral of the drama. Lucifer, in conducting Cain through the air, instils into his mind the same impious thoughts, by which he tempted him to the journey; exciting his desire to know more than is permitted for mortals to know, yet unfolding only so much

of the mysteries, as may rather serve to confuse than enlighten his mind; to increase his discontent of his own fallen state, than to inspire an admiration of the wonders he beholds.

Having thus, by crafty appeals to his passions, bewildered the better impressions of Cain's nature, and rendered him almost a fit companion for the fallen host, to whose presence he is about to introduce him, Lucifer conducts his mortal companion to the gates of Hell: these open wide before them as the congregated vapours roll away, and the insidious guide and his too willing convert enter together.

Cain no sooner plunges into the realm of death than he loses all reserve; every spark of remaining virtue seems blasted by the pestilential air he breathes in common with the Demonian spirits.

Oh God! I dare not think on't! Cursed be
He who invented life that leads to death!
Or the dull mass of life, that being life
Could not retain, but needs must forfeit it—
Even for the innocent!

Luc. Dost thou curse thy father?

Cain. Cursed he not me in giving me my birth?
Cursed he not me before my birth, in daring
To pluck the fruit forbidden?

Luc.

Thou say'st well!

Yes! he has him in his toils: nothing now seems wanting to complete his victory; for Cain has cursed his God and his father, which is the seal of his doom! What wonder, then, that Lucifer can scarcely contain his hellish joy!

Thou says't well:

The curse is mutual 'twixt thy sire and thee.

Cain, yet unsatisfied, desires to know the nature of this almighty Death, who is, it seems, inevitable:

Then what [he says] is death?

Luc. What? hath not he who made ye
Said 'tis another life?

Cain. Till now he hath
Said nothing, save that all shall die.

Luc. Perhaps
He one day will unfold that further secret.

Cain. Happy the day!

Luc. Yes; happy! when unfolded
Through agonies unspeakable, and clogg'd
With agonies eternal, to innumerable
Yet unborn myriads of unconscious atoms,
All to be animated for this only!

In the same strain of impious discontent does Milton's Adam arraign the purposes of God after his fall.

‘ O fleeting joys

‘ Of Paradise, dear bought with lasting woes!
 ‘ Did I request thee, Maker, from my clay
 ‘ To mould me man? Did I solicit thee
 ‘ From darkness to promote me, or here place
 ‘ In this delicious garden? As my will
 ‘ Concurr’d not to my being, it were but right
 ‘ And equal to reduce me to my dust,
 ‘ Desirous to resign and render back
 ‘ All I received, unable to perform
 ‘ Thy terms too hard, by which I was to hold
 ‘ The good I sought not.’

Book x. v. 174,

Lucifer had first seduced Cain to tempt the ‘Abyss of Space’ by representing to him the beauty of knowledge, which would place him beyond the reach of fear and above the groveling thoughts of earth, and lead him to happiness in the contemplation of celestial and unimaginable things. But now that he sees him securely in his power, he no longer conceals the misery, which this very knowledge will occasion him, as he predicts the future empire of sin throughout the world.

Cain answers,

I understand not this.

Luc.

The happier thou!—

Thy world and thou are still too young! Thou thinkest Thyself most wicked and unhappy, &c.

First-born of the first man !

Thy present state of sin—and thou art evil,
Of sorrow—and thou sufferest, are both Eden
In all its innocence compared to what
Thou shortly may'st be ; and that state again,
In its redoubled wretchedness, a Paradise
To what thy sons' sons' sons, accumulating
In generations like to dust, (which they
In fact but add to,) shall endure and do.—
Now let us back to earth !

Cain. And wherefore didst thou
Lead me here only to inform me this ?

Luc. Was not thy quest for knowledge ?

Cain. Yes : as being
The road to happiness.

Luc. If truth be so,
Thou hast it.

Cain. Then my father's God did well
When he prohibited the fatal tree.

Let this and the following passages be read with the attention they deserve, and I will venture to say, that scarcely any thing in our language more clearly 'points a moral,' more correctly shows the necessary connexion of sin and misery ; or more forcibly conveys to the mind all the fatal consequences of an aberration from virtue,—cheerless disappointment of the pleasures and enjoyments we had promised to our-

selves from the indulgence of our unrestrained desires, deep execration and reproach against those who have tempted us to it,—with remorse and self-condemnation, aggravated by the certain horrors of retribution, which the delusive sophistry of the heart can no longer conceal from us.

The mind of the betrayed Cain now begins to be sensible to the danger of his situation: he has penetrated all the mysteries, which Lucifer could disclose: he feels that, so far from relieving his unquiet thoughts, or satisfying his desires, they have only led him to the foreknowledge of the wretchedness entailed on him, and on the successive generations of which he is the germ: he hears, above all, that it is the misery and debasement of sin, by which they shall suffer; and he now, for the first time, begins to doubt the purpose of Lucifer, and perceives the mercy of the Deity in having concealed from man the great dispensations of his providence.

But, alas! it is too late: his curse of God and his father has passed his lips irrevocably. He finds the tempter is about to leave him—as he ever has, and ever will leave his unhappy victims,—in utter hopelessness and despair. He

reproaches him for having seduced him from earth, only to make him wretched. The demon, however, offers him no consolation, but malignantly endeavours to poison the only remaining source of comfort which is left to him, —his affection for Adah, his beloved Adah, by foretelling the decay of her beauty, and the consequent diminution of his love for her.

Cain. Within those glorious orbs which we behold,
Distant and dazzling, and innumerable,
Ere we came down into this phantom realm,
Ill cannot come; they are too beautiful.

Luc. Thou hast seen them from afar.

Cain. And what of that?
Distance can but diminish glory—they
When nearer must be more ineffable.

Luc. Approach the things of earth most beautiful,
And judge their beauty near.

Cain. I have done this—
The loveliest thing I know is loveliest nearest.

Luc. Then there must be delusion. What is that
Which being nearest to thine eyes is still
More beautiful than beauteous things remote?

Cain. My sister Adah. All the stars of heaven,
The deep blue noon of night, lit by an orb
Which looks a spirit, or a spirit's world—
The hues of twilight—the sun's gorgeous coming—
His setting indescribable, which fills
My eyes with pleasant tears as I behold

Him sink, and feel my heart float softly with him
 Along that western paradise of clouds—
 The forest shade—the green bough—the bird's voice,
 The vesper bird's, which seems to sing of love,
 And mingles with the song of cherubim,
 As the day closes over Eden's walls;—
 All these are nothing to my eyes and heart
 Like Adah's face: I turn from earth and heaven
 To gaze on it.

Luc. 'Tis frail as fair mortality,
 In the first dawn and bloom of young creation
 And earliest embraces of earth's parents,
 Can make its offspring; still it is delusion, &c.
 Thou lovest it, because 'tis beautiful
 As was the apple in thy mother's eye;
 And when it ceases to be so, thy love
 Will cease, like any other appetite.

Cain. Cease to be beautiful! how can that be?

Luc. With time.

Cain. But time has past, and hitherto
 Even Adam and my mother both are fair:
 Not fair like Adah and the seraphim—
 But very fair.

Luc. All that must pass away
 In them and her.

Though the unhappy victim's mind has been
 agitated by the sight of new worlds, and his
 imagination bewildered, and as it were set
 afloat on a tempestuous sea of uncertainty, by

the tortuous reasoning of his seducer, yet the recollection of Adah and his parents lights up the last gleam of tender feeling in his heart; it cheers, and for a moment inspires him with affection for his family—‘Adam and my mother both are very fair;’ ‘I turn from earth and heaven to gaze on Adah’s face.’ And he adds, ‘I pity thee, who lov’st nothing,’ for Lucifer had told him a little before, ‘Mortal, my brotherhood’s with those who have no children.’ This last remnant of nature’s softer mould, and the reproachful expression of a mortal’s pity, excite all the malevolence of the fiend to expel the rising sentiments of love, lest Cain should find some resting-place for his heart, which might lead him to be thankful and to worship: he touches, therefore, another fatal chord, and wakes up fresh sounds of mischief in his heart—jealousy of his brother Abel, and hatred, its direful accompaniment.

Luc. And thy brother,
Sits he not near thy heart?

Cain. Why should he not?

Luc. Thy father loves him well—so does thy God.

Cain. And so do I.

Luc. 'Tis well and meekly done.

Cain. Meekly.

Luc. He is the second born of flesh,
And is his mother's favourite.

Cain. Let him keep
Her favour, since the serpent was the first
To win it.

Luc. And his father's?

Cain. What is that
To me? should I not love that which all love?

Luc. And the Jehovah—the indulgent Lord,
And bounteous planter of barr'd Paradise—
He, too, looks smilingly on Abel.

Cain. I
Ne'er saw him—and I know not if he smiles.

Luc. But you have seen his angels.

Cain. Rarely.

Luc. But
Sufficiently to see they love your brother;
His sacrifices are acceptable.

Cain. So be they! wherefore speak to me of this?

Luc. Because thou hast thought of this ere now.

Cain. And if
I have thought, why recall a thought that——(he pauses,
as agitated)—Spirit!

Here we are in *thy* world; speak not of *mine*.

The devil perceives that he has fixed his stamp on Cain, and that every thing works to the dreadful consummation of his fate. A brother, the child of the same parents, has been rendered the object of all the passions which raged in his bosom:

the virtues of Abel, cherished of his kindred, and favoured of God, become, by the agency of hell, the source of crime and bloodshed. The deadly purpose is effected, for the heart is poisoned : and Lucifer, exulting in his work, and confident of the certainty of its effect, proposes to dismiss his new creature to his native earth, which is too soon to be stained with the first murder.

And now I will convey thee to thy world,
Where thou shalt multiply the race of Adam,
Eat, drink, toil, tremble, laugh, weep, sleep, and die.

Cain. And to what end have I beheld these things
Which thou hast shown me ?

Luc. Didst thou not require
Knowledge? And have I not, in what I show'd,
Taught thee to know thyself?

Cain. Alas ! I seem
Nothing.

Luc. And this should be the human sum
Of knowledge, to know mortal nature's nothingness ;
Bequeath that science to thy children, and
'Twill spare them many tortures.

Cain. Haughty spirit !
Thou speak'st it proudly ; but thyself, though proud,
Hast a superior.

Luc. No ! By heaven, which He
Holds, and the abyss, and the immensity

Of worlds and life, which I hold with him—No!
 I have a victor—true; but no superior.
 Homage he has from all—but none from me:
 I battle it against him, as I battled
 In highest heaven. Through all eternity,
 And the unfathomable gulfs of Hades,
 And the interminable realms of space,
 And the infinity of endless ages.
 All, all, will I dispute! And world by world,
 And star by star, and universe by universe
 Shall tremble in the balance, till the great
 Conflict shall cease, if ever it shall cease,
 Which it ne'er shall, till he or I be quench'd!
One good gift has the fatal apple given—
 Your *reason*:—let it not be over-sway'd
 By tyrannous threats to force you into faith
 'Gainst all external sense and inward feeling:
 Think and endure,—and form an inner world
 In your own bosom—where the outward fails;
 So shall you nearer be the spiritual
 Nature, and war triumphant with your own.

If this language must be considered dread-
 fully energetic, yet is it not the language of the
 fiend? and can it be said that such is likely to
 corrupt or to seduce, except perhaps another
 Cain, to whom his own heart must be an evil
 spirit? In the prosecution of the object proposed
 by this address, I must pursue the present course
 of citation, even at the risk of being thought

unreasonably tedious, in order at once to justify the ‘Mystery,’ and the assertion hazarded by way of comparison with the writings of Milton, to whom malevolence itself has never ventured to affix the stigma of impiety. I shall, therefore, point out one or two passages, as offering a parallel of equally ungovernable hate and defiance to the will of the Highest, on the part of his devils, in the poem of *PARADISE LOST*.

To begin with part of Satan’s address to his compeers in sin :

- ‘ All hope excluded thus, behold instead
- ‘ Of us, outcast, exiled, his new delight
- ‘ Mankind created, and for him this world !
- ‘ So farewell hope, and with hope farewell fear,
- ‘ Farewell remorse : all good to me is lost ;—
- ‘ Evil be thou my good ; by thee at least
- ‘ Divided empire with Heaven’s King I hold,
- ‘ By thee, and more than half perhaps will reign,
- ‘ As man ere long, and this new world shall know.’

Book iv. v. 105.

And again to the Archangel, whom God sent to oppose the hostile array of spirits.

- ‘ Err not that so shall end
- ‘ The strife which thou call’st evil, but we style
- ‘ The strife of glory ; which we mean to win,
- ‘ Or turn this heaven itself into the hell
- ‘ Thou fablest, here however to dwell free

‘ If not to reign : meanwhile thy utmost force,—
 ‘ And join him, named Almighty, to thy aid—
 ‘ I fly not, but have sought thee far and nigh.’

Book vi. v. 288.

And Moloch, the fiercest of those who fought
 in heaven.

‘ What fear we then ? what doubt we to incense
 ‘ His utmost ire ? which to the height enraged,
 ‘ Will either quite consume us, and reduce
 ‘ To nothing this essential (happier far
 ‘ Than, miserable, to have eternal being);
 ‘ Or if our substance be indeed divine,
 ‘ And cannot cease to be, we are at worst
 ‘ On this side nothing ; and by proof we feel
 ‘ Our power sufficient to disturb his heaven,
 ‘ And with perpetual inroads to alarm,
 ‘ Though inaccessible, his fatal throne ;
 ‘ Which, if not victory, is yet revenge.’ Book ii. v. 94.

And again in Satan’s memorable address to
 Beelzebub.

‘ Yet not for those,
 ‘ Nor what the potent victor in his rage
 ‘ Can else inflict, do I repent or change.
 ‘ (Though changed in outward lustre) that fix’d mind
 ‘ And high disdain, from sense of injured merit
 ‘ That with the Mightiest raised me to contend, &c.
 ‘ What though the field be lost,
 ‘ All is not lost ; th’ unconquerable will,
 ‘ And study of revenge, immortal hate,

- ‘ And courage never to submit or yield,
- ‘ And what is else not to be overcome,
- ‘ That glory never shall his wrath or might
- ‘ Extort from me.’ Book i. v. 94.

And lastly (that we may not further dwell on passages to this point) when he refuses to acknowledge the Messiah, and ‘with calumnious art of counterfeited truth’ addresses the fallen angels.

- ‘ Who can in reason then, or right, assume
- ‘ Monarchy over such as live by right
- ‘ His equals, if in power and splendour less,
- ‘ In freedom equal? or can introduce
- ‘ Law and edict on us, who without law
- ‘ Err not? much less for this to be our Lord,
- ‘ And look for adoration, to th’ abuse
- ‘ Of those imperial titles, which assert
- ‘ Our being ordained to govern, not to serve.’

Book v. v. 794.

It suited well with the whole train of Lucifer’s argument, that his parting words should confirm Cain’s pride and presumptuous confidence in himself: indeed it was necessary to the success of his infernal projects that he should persuade him to

- Think and endure—and form an inner world
- In his own bosom.

He knew that 'inner world' would surely bring his victim to the perdition which he desired: he had seen enough of the workings of his mind to be convinced, that, with a thirst to know, he also possessed a haughty spirit, prepared to doubt of all things beyond the capacity of his reason. He had already acknowledged

It is not with the earth, though I must till it,
 I feel at war—but that I may not —
 ———gratify my thousand swelling thoughts
 With knowledge.

The devil had begun by flattering him into the belief that it was his 'immortal part, which spoke within him,' when he doubted Heaven's goodness; and that he might induce him to look upon the Deity as the 'indefinite, indissoluble tyrant,' which he had represented him, he concluded by desiring him still to exercise that reason, which he himself had succeeded so effectually in perverting.

Let it not be overweigh'd

By tyrannous threats to force you into faith
 'Gainst all external sense, and inward feeling.
 Think and endure—and form an inner world, &c.

The train of argument, by which the tempter in PARADISE LOST prevailed on Eve to eat of the forbidden tree was not dissimilar to the pro-

gress of Cain's seduction in his conference with the spirit. The serpent, too, began by flattery,—

- ' Fairest resemblance of thy Maker fair,
- ' Thee all things living gaze on, all things thine
- ' By gift, and thy celestial beauty adore
- ' With ravishment beheld ;'— Book ix. v. 538.

and having thus secured her willing attention, he persuades her, by his 'glozing' arguments, to a disbelief of 'God's rigid threats of death,' and leads her to question his justice in denying to them the fruit of the tree :

- ' Why then was this forbid ? why but to awe ?
- ' Why but to keep you low and ignorant
- ' His worshippers ?' v. 703.

Then, exciting her desire to comprehend the mysteries of the knowledge, which is concealed from her, he endeavours to convince her, that Adam and herself, in their nature, have as fit capacity for that knowledge as Gods.

- ' And what are Gods, that man may not become
- ' As they, participating Godlike food ?
- ' The Gods are first, and that advantage use
- ' On our belief, that all from them proceeds :
- ' I question it, for this fair earth I see
- ' Warm'd by the sun, producing every kind,
- ' Them nothing : '—

' ————— and wherein lies

- ‘Th’ offence, that man should thus attain to know?
- ‘What can your knowledge hurt him, or this tree
- ‘Impart against his will, if all be his.
- ‘Or is it envy? and can envy dwell
- ‘In heavenly breasts?’ v. 716.

Nor does Milton represent our first mother less weak or facile in the temptation she is exposed to, than we find the victim of Lucifer’s attack in the drama before us: too soon she acquiesces in all that Satan says, approaches the tree, of which the fruit has proved so bitter to mankind, and thus impiously addresses it.

- ‘Great are thy virtues, best of fruits,
- ‘Though kept from man, &c.
- ‘Thy praise he also, who forbids thy use,
- ‘Conceals not from us, naming thee the tree
- ‘Of knowledge, knowledge both of good and evil;
- ‘Forbids us then to taste, but his forbidding
- ‘Commends thee more, while it infers the good
- ‘By thee communicated, and our want.
- ‘In plain then, what forbids he but to know,
- ‘Forbids us good, forbids us to be wise?
- ‘Such prohibitions bind not. But if death
- ‘Bind us with after bands, what profits then
- ‘Our inward freedom? &c.
- ‘What fear I then, rather what know to fear
- ‘Under this ignorance of good and evil,
- ‘Of God or death; of law or penalty?’

Book ix. v. 758.

And at length, when she has plucked and eaten, 'thus to herself she pleasingly began :'

' O sovereign, virtuous, precious of all trees,
 ' —————henceforth my early care
 ' Shall tend thee,—————
 ' Till dieted by thee I grow mature
 ' In knowledge as the Gods, who all things know,
 ' Though others envy what they cannot give;
 ' For had the gift been theirs, it had not here
 ' Thus grown—
 ' And I perhaps am secret ; heaven is high,
 ' High, and remote to see from thence distinct
 ' Each thing on earth ; and other care perhaps
 ' May have diverted from continual watch
 ' Our great Forbidder, safe with all his spies
 ' About him.' v. 795.

In the last act of the 'Mystery,' we find Cain restored to his family, but not to his former comparatively happy state of feeling. All his guilty passions have become more headstrong by his communion with Lucifer ; his former discontent is deepened into an impious and daring denial of God's beneficence ; his fear of death has given place only to a reckless

despair; his jealousy of Abel, and his hatred of his parents, through whose offence he fell from Paradise, still rankle in his bosom with increasing fury, and, whilst he is in this state of mind, the scene opens upon him and Adah, watching their sleeping infant Enoch, to whom he addresses this sullen apostrophe.

He smiles, and sleeps! Sleep on
 And smile, thou little, young inheritor
 Of a world scarce less young: sleep on, and smile!
 'Thine are the hours and days when both are cheering
 And innocent!—thou hast not pluck'd the fruit—
 Thou know'st not thou art naked! Must the time
 Come thou shalt be amerced for sins unknown,
 Which were not thine nor mine?
 But now sleep on!

He must dream—
 Of what? of Paradise! Ay! dream of it,
 My disinherited boy! 'Tis but a dream;
 For never more thyself, thy sons, nor fathers,
 Shall walk in that forbidden place of joy!

Adah. Cain! that proud spirit, who withdrew thee
 hence,
 Hath sadden'd thine still deeper. I had hoped
 The promised wonders which thou hast beheld,
 Visions, thou say'st, of past and present worlds,
 Would have composed thy mind into the calm

Of a contented knowledge; but I see
Thy guide hath done thee evil.

Adah speaks too truly, and he seems to feel himself that the malignant spirit, whom he followed to the other world, has led him on to greater misery than he felt before.

I had beheld the immemorial works
Of endless beings; skirr'd extinguish'd worlds:
And, gazing on eternity, methought
I had borrow'd more by a few drops of ages
From its immensity; but now I feel
My littleness again. Well said the spirit
That I was nothing.

Adah. Wherefore said he so?
Jehovah said not that.

Cain. No: *he* contents him
With making us the nothing which we are;
And after flattering dust with glimpses of
Eden and immortality, resolves
It back to dust again—for what?

Adah. Thou know'st,—
Even for our parents' error.

Cain. What is that
To us? they sinn'd, then *let them* die!

Adah. Thou hast not spoken well, nor is that thought
Thy own, but of the spirit who was with thee.
Would *I* could die for them, so they might live.

Cain. Why so say I—provided that one victim

Might satiate the insatiable of life,
 And that our little rosy sleeper there
 Might never taste of death nor human sorrow,
 Nor hand it down to those who spring from him.

Thus we find Adam described by Milton, after his exile from Eden, arraigning the dispensations of Providence in the universal misery to be brought on his descendants through his offence :

‘ In me all
 ‘ Posterity stands cursed : fair patrimony
 ‘ That I must leave ye, sons ! O were I able
 ‘ To waste it all myself, and leave ye none ;
 ‘ So disinherited, how would ye bless
 ‘ Me, now your curse ! Ah why should all mankind
 ‘ For one man’s fault thus guiltless be condemn’d,
 ‘ If guiltless ?’

Book x. v. 817.

And again, with feelings very similar, in the eleventh book of PARADISE LOST, he renews his complaint at the vision of death’s empire over the world, which the angel Michael has set before him :

‘ O miserable mankind, to what fall
 ‘ Degraded, to what wretched state reserved !
 ‘ Better end here unborn. Why is life given
 ‘ To be thus wrested from us ? rather why
 ‘ Obtruded on us thus ? who, if we knew

- ‘ What we receive, would either not accept
- ‘ Life offer’d, or soon beg to lay it down,
- ‘ Glad to be dismiss’d in peace.’

Cain now perceives two altars, built by Abel during his absence, for their intended sacrifice : he is stung with furious jealousy at this instance of his brother’s piety,—of that piety, which has met the favour of Jehovah, and obtained for him the preference of their common parents. The insinuations of the fiend have worked their poisonous effects in his soul : his brother’s offerings, he says, are made with base humility, showing more of fear than worship, and, for himself, *he* has *no* sacrifice to make.

Adah. The fruits of the earth, the early, beautiful Blossom and bud, and bloom of flowers, and fruits ; These are a goodly offering to the Lord, Given with a gentle and a contrite spirit.

Cain. I have toil’d, and till’d, and sweaten in the sun, According to the curse : must I do more ? For what should I be gentle ? for a war With all the elements ere they will yield The bread we eat ? For what must I be grateful ? For being dust, and groveling in the dust, Till I return to dust ? If I am nothing— For nothing shall I be a hypocrite, And seem well-pleased with pain ? For what should I Be contrite ? for my father’s sin, already

Expiate with what we all have undergone,
 And to be more than expiated by
 The ages prophesied, upon our seed.
 Little deems our young blooming sleeper, there,
 The germs of an eternal misery
 To myriads is within him ! better 'twere
 I snatch'd him in his sleep, and dash'd him 'gainst
 The rocks, than let him live to——

Adah.

Oh, my God !

Touch not the child—my child ! *thy* child ! Oh Cain !

With a not less reckless despair did Eve propose to avert the woes denounced against her race by self-destruction, when she thus addressed herself to Adam ;

- ‘ If care of our descent perplex us most,
- ‘ Which must be born to certain woe, devour’d
- ‘ By death at last ; and miserable it is
- ‘ To be to others cause of misery,’ &c.
- ‘ Then both ourselves and seed at once to free
- ‘ From what we fear for both, let us make short,
- ‘ Let us seek death, or he not found, supply
- ‘ With our own hands his office on ourselves.
- ‘ Why stand we longer shivering under fears
- ‘ That show no end but death, and have the power
- ‘ Of many ways to die, the shortest choosing,
- ‘ Destruction with destruction to destroy?’

Book xi. v. 979.

Adah’s gentleness, however, subdues the furious spirit of Cain. In language most beautiful,

in tones of such tender sentiment as 'fill our eyes with pleasant tears,' she appeals to his feelings as a father and a husband, and, at length, by her soul-subduing eloquence, restores him to a momentary composure. When he says it were better Enoch never had been born, she answers him in all the strain of impassioned yet affectionate feeling, which such a reproach was calculated to excite in a mother's bosom,

Oh, do not say so! Where were then the joys,
The mother's joys of watching, nourishing,
And loving him? Soft! he awakes. Sweet Enoch!

[*She goes to the child.*]

Oh Cain! look on him; see how full of life,
Of strength, of bloom, of beauty, and of joy,
How like to me—how like to thee, when gentle,
For *then* we are *all* alike; is't not so, Cain?
Mother, and sire, and son, our features are
Reflected in each other; as they are
In the clear waters, when *they* are *gentle*, and
When *thou* art *gentle*. Love us, then, my Cain!
And love thyself for our sakes, for we love thee.
Look! how he laughs and stretches out his arms,
And opens wide his blue eyes upon thine,
To hail his father; while his little form
Flutters as wing'd with joy. Talk not of pain!
The childless cherubs well might envy thee
The pleasures of a parent! Bless him, Cain!

As yet he hath no words to thank thee, but
His heart will, and thine own too.

Cain's rugged temper is for a moment softened;

Bless thee, boy! [he says]

If that a mortal blessing may avail thee,

To save thee from the serpent's curse!

They are interrupted by the entrance of
Abel, who comes to the appointed offering;—
Cain receives him with morose averted looks,
and in answer to his inquiries, where he has
been, and what he has seen in communion with
the spirit, whom he has been wandering with,—
'What hast thou seen?' he exclaims,

The dead,

The immortal, the unbounded, the omnipotent,

The overpowering mysteries of space—

The innumerable worlds that were and are—

A whirlwind of such overwhelming things,

Suns, moons, and earths, upon their loud-voiced spheres

Singing in thunder round me, as have made me

Unfit for mortal converse: leave me, Abel.

Abel. Thine eyes are flashing with unnatural light—

Thy cheek is flush'd with an unnatural hue—

Thy words are fraught with an unnatural sound—

What may this mean?

Cain.

It means——I pray thee, leave me.

Abel, however, will not be spurned from his
presence, but uses such persuasive entreaties

to him to sacrifice, that, at last, the wretched man reluctantly consents ;

If it must be so——well, then,
What shall I do ?

I have already detained you so long, Sir, that I must forbear to add many further passages from this scene, the whole of which is equal to the highest efforts of poetry in our language, but at once proceed to the fatal catastrophe of the drama.

The sacrifices being disposed on the altars, they address themselves to the Deity—Abel, in all the humility of a true worshipper, supplicating the ‘ sole Lord of light, of good and glory, and eternity,’ whilst Cain’s proud heart, refusing obeisance, ‘ seeks nothing which must be won by kneeling.’ Abel’s sacrifice is accepted, but a whirlwind scatters that of Cain, who rises in phrensy against the altars, threatening to overthrow them, and, upon Abel’s endeavouring to oppose his intention, gives him a mortal blow on the temples with a brand, which he has snatched from the fire. Abel falls, and falteringly exclaims,

What hast thou done, my brother ?

Cain. Brother !

Abel. Oh, God! receive thy servant, and
 Forgive his slayer, for he knew not what
 He did.—Cain, give me thy hand.

Cain. My hand! 'tis all red, and with—
 What?

[A long pause.—Looking slowly round.]

Where am I? alone! Where's Abel? where
 Cain? Can it be that I am he? My brother,
 Awake!—why liest thou so on the green earth?
 'Tis not the hour of slumber:—why so pale?
 What, hast thou!—thou wert full of life this morn!
 Abel! I pray thee, mock me not! I smote
 Too fiercely, but not fatally. Ah, why
 Would'st thou oppose me? This is mockery;
 And only done to daunt me:—'twas a blow—
 And but a blow. Stir—stir—nay, only stir!
 Why, so—that's well!—thou breath'st! breathe upon me!
 Oh, God! Oh, God!

Cain's sin stares him in the face in all its
 horror. He sees the gulf, into which he has
 been led by the arguments of Lucifer:—he has
 brought death into the world, and awakens
 from his fatal dream only to find, that he has
 himself accomplished 'the heavy doom, so long
 forespoken' to man.

I—who abhor

The name of Death so deeply, that the thought
 Empoison'd all my life, before I knew
 His aspect—I have led him here, and giv'n

My brother to his cold and still embrace,
 As if he would not have asserted his
 Inexorable claim without my aid.
 I am awake at last—a dreary dream
 Had madden'd me;—but *he* shall ne'er awake!

Thus, Sir, have I endeavoured to conduct you through the progress of Cain's seduction, on which the deep interest of the poem is made to hang, and the greater portion of which is necessarily comprehended in the conferences between him and the tempter. I may now, perhaps, be permitted to take a very short retrospect of the other characters of the 'Mystery,' for the purpose of showing that there is nothing in the sentiments they utter, to which the most scrupulous censor of public morals can take exception. On the contrary, it may be safely advanced, that wherever the chain of incidents permitted the introduction of other personages than the demon and his victim, the poet has not failed to give some of those true touches of piety and tender feeling, which the occasion called for. What reader can fail to be impressed with the devotional sacrifice of Adam and his family, when, in the opening scene, they offer up these beautiful prayers?

Adam. God, the Eternal ! Infinite ! All-Wise !—
 Who out of darkness on the deep didst make
 Light on the waters with a word—all hail !
 Jehovah, with returning light, all hail !

Eve. God ! who didst name the day, and separate
 Morning from night, till then divided never—
 Who didst divide the wave from wave, and call
 Part of thy work the firmament—all hail !

Abel. God ! who didst call the elements into
 Earth—ocean—air—and fire, and with the day
 And night, and worlds which these illuminate
 Or shadow, madest beings to enjoy them,
 And love both them and thee—all hail ! all hail !

Adah. God, the Eternal ! Parent of all things !
 Who didst create these best and beauteous beings,
 To be beloved, more than all, save thee—
 Let me love thee and them :—All hail ! all hail !

Zillah. Oh, God ! who loving, making, blessing all,
 Yet didst permit the serpent to creep in,
 And drive my father forth from Paradise,
 Keep us from further evil :—Hail ! all hail !

Let us connect these effusions with the bright example of piety, resignation and humility, portrayed in the character of Abel: let us review the guileless innocence of Adah, whose every expression breathes an inspired devotion, and a submissive acquiescence to the will of Heaven: let us contrast all this with the easy progress of Cain's

mind to infidelity, and the consequent remorse he feels at having listened to the devil's sophistries, by which, when he is roused from his 'maddening dreary vision,' he perceives his reason has been perverted: let us mark, above all, the great example of punishment, which is held out to man in the horrors of his ultimate fate—and then may every dispassionate reader determine, whether this 'Mystery' be really a mischievous production, or whether its moral do not offer a salutary warning of the nature and consequences of impiety.

There is one observation of 'Oxoniensis,' of which, however pointed, I have been wholly unable to find the application: he says 'Lord Byron doubtless thinks it a fine thing to strike at the very existence of society by pestilent sophistries framed to mislead the weaker sex. It is difficult to advert to this part of the subject without expressing, in such terms as indignation suggests, an opinion on this dastardly perversion of intellectual ingenuity. I will not stain my page with quotations; but *no one* who has had the misfortune to read Cain *will be at a loss to understand the allusion.*'

From the pen of one, whose signature bespeaks him a gentleman and a scholar, such an

aspersion must necessarily produce a serious influence on many, who are either likely to become readers, or who are called upon to regulate the reading of others: and I can only hope that, if he has, by the warmth of his zeal, been betrayed into a mistake, his candour and love of justice will induce a retraction of the charge. It was natural to suppose, on reading the passage I have just cited, that I had inadvertently passed over some obscene passages in *Cain*, or at least some questionable allusions, which might endanger the principles of unsuspecting innocence; but, after having scanned the whole poem over with attention, for the distinct purpose of detecting those unspeakable horrors which cannot be allowed to 'stain the pages of *Oxoniensis*,' I may honestly declare that I see nothing in it whatever to justify the accusation.

That we may, however, bring this charge to the proof, I shall consider, separately, every passage in the drama, which has any reference whatever to the subject alluded to; and this without apology, because there is not one, that may not safely be read by the weakest of 'the weaker sex.' In the first scene, Adah having expressed her love for Cain, who was her hus-

band and her brother, Lucifer asks her if she love him more than her mother and her sire: she answers,

I do. Is that a sin, too?

Luc.

No, not yet ;

It one day will be in your children.

Adah.

What !

Must not my daughter love her brother Enoch ?

Luc. Not as thou lovest Cain.

Adah.

Oh, my God !

Shall they not love and bring forth things that love
Out of their love ? have they not drawn their milk
Out of this bosom ? was not he, their father,
Born of the same sole womb, in the same hour
With me ? did we not love each other ? and
In multiplying our being multiply
Things which will love each other as we love
Them ?—

Luc. The sin I speak of is not of my making,
And cannot be a sin in you—whate'er
It seem in those who will replace ye in
Mortality.

Permit me to ask, Sir, if you perceive anything in this, framed to mislead either an ignorant or an innocent mind ?—Adah is the sister of Cain as well as his wife, which, in them, was no offence ; for, as there was only one family on the earth, their marriage was necessary to the ful-

filment of God's wise purposes. Adah was as wholly unconscious of, as she was free from, sin in loving Cain, her brother; and it is expressly said by Lucifer, 'you do not transgress, though it will be a sin in the generations which follow you:' alluding to those wise and salutary restrictions, afterwards introduced by the inspired lawgiver of the Hebrews, and adopted by all civilized nations, to prevent the intermarriage of near relatives, for reasons which would suggest themselves to every reflecting mind. In my apprehension, this is so far from appearing to 'strike at the existence of society,' that it is, in fact, one of the few occasions when Lucifer speaks the truth.

There is another passage, to which allusion is probably made, and which I shall proceed to examine, in the full confidence, that nothing in the citation can give offence even to the most refined and sensitive moralist. In the second scene of the second act, Lucifer says to Cain,

Eve, thy mother, best
Can tell what shape of serpent tempted her.
Your father saw him not?

Cain. No: 'twas my mother
Who tempted him—she tempted by the serpent.

Luc. Good man! whene'er thy wife, or thy sons' wives

Tempt thee or them to aught that's new or strange,
Be sure thou see'st first who hath tempted *them*.

Cain. Thy precept comes too late: there is no more
For serpents to tempt woman to.

Luc.

But there

Are some things still which woman may tempt man to,
And man tempt woman:—let thy sons look to it!

My counsel is a kind one; for 'tis even
Given chiefly at my own expense: 'tis true,
'T will not be follow'd, so there's little lost.

Cain. I understand not this.

Luc.

The happier thou!—

Is there any pestilent sophistry here? or is it, in an age like the present, when the daily newspapers, which find their way into every family, are filled with nauseous details of profligacy,—that our delicate feelings should be shocked at the poet's anticipations of the future progress of vice in a luxurious and corrupted age? And when 'Oxoniensis' professes that 'he will not stain his pages' with Lucifer's mere allusion to the dissolute morals of the coming generations, he appears to have forgotten that prophetic vision, which the Archangel brought before the mortal ken of Adam, after his exile from the happy garden.

' They on the plain

' Long had not walk'd, when from the tents behold

- ‘ A bevy of fair women, richly gay
- ‘ In gems and wanton dress; to th’ harp they sung
- ‘ Soft amorous ditties, and in dance came on,’ &c.

As Adam looked on these with eyes, ‘too soon inclined to admit delight,’ Michael warns him against their seductive influence.

- ‘ Those tents thou saw’st so pleasant, were the tents
- ‘ Of wickedness, wherein shall dwell his race,
- ‘ Who slew his brother; &c.
- ‘ Yet they a beauteous offspring shall beget;
- ‘ For that fair female troop thou saw’st, that seem’d
- ‘ Of goddesses so blithe, so smooth, so gay, &c.
- ‘ Yet empty of all good wherein consists
- ‘ Woman’s domestic honour and chief praise;
- ‘ Bred only and completed to the taste
- ‘ Of lustful appetite, to sing, to dance,
- ‘ To dress, and troll the tongue, and roll the eye.
- ‘ To these that sober race of men, whose lives
- ‘ Religious titled them the sons of God
- ‘ Shall yield up all their virtue, all their fame,’ &c.

Book xi. v. 607.

To these I may add a similar passage from the poem of *PARADISE REGAINED*, where in the Council, held by the Demonian spirits to consider how Satan best may tempt the Son of God, Belial impiously says,

- ‘ Set women in his eye, and in his walk,
- ‘ Among daughters of men the fairest found;

- ‘ Many are in each region passing fair
- ‘ As the noon sky; more like to goddesses
- ‘ Than mortal creatures, graceful, and discreet,
- ‘ Expert in am’rous arts, enchanting tongues
- ‘ Persuasive, virgin majesty with mild
- ‘ And sweet allay’d, yet terrible to approach,
- ‘ Skill’d to retire, and in retiring draw
- ‘ Hearts after them tangled in amorous nets,
- ‘ Such object hath the power,’ &c.

Book ii. v. 153.

I must profess, that when I first read the ‘Mystery,’ immediately on its publication, my impressions were altogether different from those so unhesitatingly and unequivocally expressed by ‘Oxoniensis:’ and upon a more intimate acquaintance with its beauties, as well as a more calm and deliberate review of the whole scope of the drama, I can find no ground, on which to impugn its moral tendency. The brilliancy of conception and depth of thought, which it displays, appear to me to be equalled only by the force and harmony of the language and rhythm—and in my humble estimation (be it said without offence to the admirers of Milton) the finest passages in *PARADISE LOST* do not bear away the palm in the comparison with many to be found in *CAIN* *.

* It must not, of course, be supposed, that I intend to

After an opinion, which may possibly appear to those, who consider themselves the orthodox in criticism, to be an overstrained eulogy, it may be permitted to me to say, Sir, that the individual, who has the honour now to address you, is wholly unacquainted with Lord Byron,—whilst he is as far beyond the necessity, as he is above the desire or intention of flattering any man. A love of truth, and a sense of justice, coupled with a conviction of the danger of misrepresenting the religious sentiments of so eminent a writer, are the motives which have given an impulse to his pen. And who, but the most prejudiced reader of the ‘Mystery,’ will not feel astonished at the boldness of the assertion, that it is ‘a mere cento from Voltaire’s novels, &c. served up in clumsy cuttings of ten syllables, for the purpose of giving it the guise of poetry?’—Let posterity judge of its merits, whether as a moral or a poetic composition, and when the present unworthy jealousies, and the contest of

place the ‘Mystery’ in the hazardous competition in respect of grandeur of design, or importance and dignity of subject; the dramatic must needs yield to the superior character of the great epic.

passions shall be hushed in one oblivious silence, this wonderful poem will ever remain an illustrious ornament of our age and nation.

As I have no doubt ‘Oxoniensis’ was animated by a zeal for religion in the censures he has so boldly pronounced, it may be well allowed me to ask him, whether the cause he advocates can really be promoted by bringing an unsupported charge against the principles of the noble author of *CAIN*. I need not to remind him of that Christian maxim, which pronounces, ‘judge not, that ye be not judged;’ but I would dispassionately call upon him, as a member of our church, to reflect, whether his gratuitous assumption, that Lord Byron ‘professes to despise the happiness, which springs from the belief in religion,’ be not calculated to give weight, in the minds of the ignorant, to the doctrines of infidelity?

It has been no inconsiderable argument of the great and pious champions of the Gospel, in support of the inspired character of its revelation, that the most enlightened and powerful minds of all ages have been deeply impressed with its truth. And therefore we should have undeniable proof, ere we venture to cast the grave and dangerous imputation of in-

fidelity against one so highly gifted with intellectual endowments.

For however 'Oxoniensis' may affect to under-rate his Lordship's genius, he may be assured the world in general does not form the same estimate of it; and many there are, who, judging from the assertion thus unhesitatingly advanced of his irreligious opinions, may arrive at the false, but full conviction of its truth, and may thence conceive they find a justification for their indifference or their scepticism, in the supposed authority of his name.

However desirous I am, on this account, to disprove the aspersions cast upon Lord Byron's character, I feel some hesitation in deviating from the immediate subject of this communication, to enter upon inquiries, which, though not foreign, may possibly be deemed inappropriate. There is something so sacred in every man's sentiments on religion:—he is so wholly accountable for them to the great Searcher of hearts, and to him alone (though far be it from me to deny the privilege of a free examination of the published works of any writer), that it almost appears an unhallowed intrusion, to make them the subject of public disquisition.

As Lord Byron (conscious, no doubt, of the high vantage-ground, on which he stands, and looking with indifference on the attacks of his adversaries) has not thought it necessary to answer the swarm of busy detractors, who have endeavoured to hold up to the public a distorted picture of the workings of his genius, it may be said, perhaps, that a mere stranger is not justified in interposing in his defence. When, however, we consider his Lordship's rank, and more particularly that eminence of his talents, which has rendered him a great object of public notice, and must give to his supposed opinions on any topic a more than ordinary importance, it cannot be altogether uninteresting to refer to a few passages from his other writings, which go far to show how unjustifiably he has been misrepresented.

Has 'Oxoniensis' read the appendix to the tragedy of 'FOSCARI,' which is published in the same volume with the 'Mystery?' or has his attention been so exclusively directed to the imagined impiety of the one, as to leave him no opportunity of discovering the admirable sentiments expressed in the other? Lord Byron tells us in the preface of *Cain*, that he 'has endeavoured to preserve the language adapted

to his characters:’ and let it be always remembered, that they are fictitious characters, acting and speaking under the influence of passions and principles, indispensably necessary to the development of the plot. Would it not, then, be more candid to receive his sentiments, as he has himself declared them in the undisguised language of prose, which cannot be mistaken?

‘ There never was, nor ever will be a country without a religion. We shall be told of France again; but it was only Paris and a frantic party, which for a moment upheld their dogmatic nonsense of theo-philanthropy. The Church of England, if overthrown, will be swept away by the sectarians, and not by the sceptics.’ (Is Oxoniensis prepared to deny this?) ‘ People are too wise, too well informed, too certain of their own immense importance in the realms of space, ever to submit to the impiety of doubt. There may be a few such diffident speculators, like water in the pale sunbeam of human reason, but they are very few; and their opinions, without enthusiasm or appeal to the passions, can never gain proselytes; unless, indeed, they are persecuted—that, to be sure, will increase any thing.’

And here I cannot omit a few lines in the

‘Mystery’ itself, which afford us some further evidence of the opinions, entertained by the noble author respecting that great key-stone of revealed religion,—the truth of the advent of the blessed Messiah. The allusions are striking and important, and may serve to prove that this characteristic sentiment of the Christian is not alien to the convictions of Lord Byron’s mind : they are introduced in a manner so natural and incidental, as to exclude all idea of their application to any purpose of ostentation or design.

When Lucifer is about to take Cain with him on his ethereal journey, Adah inquires,

Will he return ?

Luc. Ay, woman ! he alone
Of mortals from that place (the first and last
Who shall return, save ONE.)

Again Lucifer says,

 There will come
An hour, when toss’d upon some water-drops,
A man shall say to a man, “ Believe in me,
And walk the waters,” and the man shall walk
The billows and be safe.

And again ;

Cain. Then what is death ?

Luc. What hath not he who made ye
Said ’tis another life ?

Cain. Till now he hath
Said nothing, save that all shall die.

Luc. Perhaps
He one day will unfold that further secret.

And though last, not least worthy of observation, are those all-conclusive passages in his Lordship's Letter on Mr. Bowles' 'Life and Writings of Pope.' The feelings there expressed can leave no doubt on the mind of any dispassionate man, that the too apparent, if not avowed object of the 'Remonstrance,' to stamp the scandal of an imputation of infidelity upon the author of the *Mystery*, is most overstrained and unjustifiable.

'The depreciation of Pope is partly founded upon a false idea of the dignity of his order of poetry, to which he has partly contributed by the ingenuous boast,

'That not in fancy's maze he wander'd long,

'But stoop'd to truth, and moraliz'd his song.

'He should have written, 'rose to truth.' In my mind the highest of all poetry is ethical poetry, as the highest of all objects must be moral truth. Religion does not make a part of my subject; it is something beyond human powers, and has failed in all human hands except Milton's and Dante's; and even Dante's

‘ powers are involved in his delineation of human
 ‘ passions, though in supernatural circumstances.
 ‘ What made Socrates the greatest of men? his
 ‘ moral truth—his ethics. What proved Jesus
 ‘ Christ the son of God, hardly less than his
 ‘ miracles? His moral precepts. And if ethics
 ‘ have made a philosopher the first of men, and
 ‘ have not been disdained as an adjunct to his
 ‘ Gospel by the Deity himself, are we to be
 ‘ told that ethical poetry, or by whatever
 ‘ name you term it, whose object is to make
 ‘ men better and wiser, is not the *very first*
 ‘ order of poetry?’

Though I might here rest satisfied with what
 has been adduced, and am desirous to conclude
 an address, already much protracted, I cannot
 withhold another passage in the same letter, re-
 lating to Milton’s description of the Messiah,
 ‘in his right hand grasping ten thousand
 thunders;’ which, if it were only for its co-
 incidence of subject, would make it a very fit
 illustration of any argument on CAIN and PA-
 RADISE LOST ; but which, as an important avowal
 of his Lordship’s sentiments, will not be thought
 unworthy of attention.

‘ In speaking of artificial objects (of poetry),
 ‘ I have omitted to touch upon one, which I will

‘ now mention. Cannon may be presumed to be
 ‘ as highly poetical as art can make her objects.
 ‘ Mr. Bowles will, perhaps, tell me that this is
 ‘ because they resemble that grand natural sound
 ‘ in heaven, and simile upon earth—thunder. I
 ‘ shall be told triumphantly, that Milton made
 ‘ sad work with his artillery, when he armed his
 ‘ devils therewithal. He did so; and this ar-
 ‘ tificial object must have had much of the
 ‘ sublime to attract his attention for such a con-
 ‘ flict. He *has* made an absurd one of it; but
 ‘ the absurdity consists, not in using *cannon*
 ‘ against the angels of God, but any *material*
 ‘ weapon. The thunder of the clouds would
 ‘ have been as ridiculous and vain in the hands
 ‘ of the devils as the “villanous saltpetre.” The
 ‘ angels were as impervious to one as to the
 ‘ other. The thunderbolt becomes sublime in
 ‘ the hands of the Almighty (I need scarcely re-
 ‘ mind you, Sir, that he is speaking of the Son
 ‘ who wielded them), not as such, but because *he*
 ‘ deigns to use them as a means of repelling the
 ‘ rebel spirits; but no one can attribute their
 ‘ defeat to this grand piece of natural electricity:
 ‘ the Almighty willed, and they fell: his word
 ‘ would have been enough; and Milton is as
 ‘ absurd (and in fact blasphemous) in putting

‘ material lightnings in the hands of the God-head, as in giving him hands at all.

‘ The artillery of the demons was but the first step of his mistake, the thunder the next, and it is a step lower. It would have been fit for Jove, but not for Jehovah. The subject altogether was essentially unpoetical; he has made more of it than another would, but it is beyond him and all men.’

In bringing to a close these extended extracts, some apology seems necessary for the particularity of detail into which I have entered, when I reflect that I have been addressing one, to whom the whole must be familiar, and whose perception of its beauties is doubtless so much more happy, than any to be struck out by these illustrations. If, however, there should have appeared any want of conciseness in the course I have pursued, I trust you will immediately have felt that I was to carry along with me, in the course of my investigation, not yourself so much, as the ordinary reader, whom I hoped to enlist in my train; and that it has arisen from an anxiety effectually to accomplish the object with which I set out,—the vindication of this MYSTERY from the charge of an impious and dangerous tendency or design. For, after the appearance of a tract,

professedly stigmatizing the poem and the author, under a signature, which indicates literary pretensions, and assumes the character of censor, I am irresistibly compelled to believe, that prejudice is actively and extensively stirring up more than doubts of the fitness of its publication. Fashion, on this, as on other occasions of life, will doubtless exercise too powerful an influence; but it becomes the candid and dispassionate portion of the community of letters to form its own opinion, superior equally to dogmatic assertion, and to a blind acquiescence in the prevailing impressions of the day;—particularly as such impressions are too often regulated by the dictation of a few, with whom neither all the taste and talent, nor all the piety and attachment to religion, can be allowed to centre.

In this endeavour to rescue CAIN from the grasp of prejudice, and to secure it a place amongst the admitted sources of instruction and mental gratification, I have not assumed to diversify my subject by any thing like criticism on its literary merits and character, though perhaps occasionally warmed into an admiration of its beauties. I only hope that, if the passages cited are not inappropriately introduced, and

the connexion of the whole not unfitly preserved, the drama will not be thought to have suffered from the manner, in which the inquiry has been conducted.

And permit me to appeal to you, Sir, whether the admirers of superior genius shall stand tamely by, and permit such a man as this to be assailed and hunted down in society,—the victim of prejudice, or of passion. Shall he, who has beguiled the weary hours of thousands, who has called forth the tears of pity, of love and admiration, by the finest touches of inimitable feeling, truth, and nature; who astonishes and delights us, and who seems to hold the passions at command,—shall such a man be denounced as an object of abhorrence, and loaded with every contumelious epithet, which can be crowded into twenty pages of a ‘Remonstrance?’ If so, we may, indeed, lament the licence of the press, which enables any anonymous writer to vilify the private character, and outrage the feelings of a distinguished poet, under the professed design of canvassing the merits of his literary publications.

If all were true, that ‘Oxoniensis’ has ventured to impute to Lord Byron, who would not lament the perversion and fall of such an

intellect? The magnificence of the ruins would but increase the bitterness of our regret at contemplating them. But I appeal to that small portion of his works, which has come under our review, for a refutation of his accusers; and with the greater confidence, because even such as participate in the impressions of Oxoniensis will scarcely deny to his Lordship that fearlessness of opinion, and that high and genuine disdain of falsehood, which must render him incapable of endeavouring to take credit for religious sentiments,—or any sentiments, which do not belong to him.

Let, then, his writings speak for him;—let the sceptic learn from them, that he has no support in his infidelity from the author of *CAIN*: let the wavering and the ignorant receive this comfortable assurance of the truth of our religion, that amidst all the splendour of imagination, with which the intellectual are gifted, they have solidity of mind to see, and know, and believe the evidences of its Divine Revelation.

I have the honor to be,

Sir,

Your most obedient humble servant,

HARROVIENSIS.

London, February, 1822.

Rev

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that a man of all the splendour of imagination, with
which he is abounded, and filled, they have
solidity of conviction, and knowledge, and
the readiness of intellect, and the force of
reason, I have the honor to be,
Sir, your obedient servant,
J. HARRINGTON



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